

ABSTRACT

Gallegos, Norma Linda., Student Achievement and Principals' Professional Experience. Doctor of Education (Ed.D), May 2008, 146 pages, 8 tables, 74 reference titles.

Today, more than ever, student accountability drives not only individual school campuses but entire school districts. Policy makers have pursued a variety of recent educational reforms to increase student learning. The school principal, as head of the campus, may be considered the most influential educational leader with respect to student achievement and, thus, campus accountability. Principals in collaboration with the leaders must define the critical components that will raise student academic performance to meet the *No Child Left Behind* standards by 2014. Historically, the school principal's role has evolved from manager to leader. It now carries an enormous moral and ethical challenge that has gone far beyond the role of a simple leader. As superintendents shuffle principals among campuses and as principals leave their positions, one begins to see movement that is ultimately affecting the learning process, and the consistency which is required for student success is being disrupted. What needs to be known is what makes a successful leader and what experience is considered to be important when searching for principals to fill vacant positions and create successful schools.

The setting for the present study is a school district in South Texas. This study will explore the achievement levels of students in the 33 elementary schools in the district

in relation to their principal's professional experience. The purpose of this quantitative study is to determine if student achievement is a function of the principal's years of experience at a campus; total years of experience as a principal; total years of experience as an administrator; and years of teaching experience prior to entering administration.

Methods used are multiple regression analysis and backward elimination procedure. The data revealed that 5th grade math was a function of the principal's years of teaching experience prior to entering administration.

The results of the present study are important in adding to the field of education in that we now have developed an understanding of the correlation of the principal's years of experience at a campus; total years of experience as a principal; total years of experience as an administrator; and years of teaching experience prior to entering administration and their relationship with student achievement.